



NEWS RELEASE

OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY
WESTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI

TODD P. GRAVES

Contact Don Ledford, Public Affairs • (816) 426-4220 • 400 East Ninth Street, Room 5510 • Kansas City, MO 64106

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

OPERATION ICE STORM
**JOPLIN MAN PLEADS GUILTY IN
MULTI-KILO METH CONSPIRACY**

SPRINGFIELD, Mo. – Todd P. Graves, United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, announced that a Joplin, Mo., man pleaded guilty in federal court today to his role in a conspiracy to distribute between five and 15 kilograms of methamphetamine in Jasper County, Mo., and to illegally possessing a firearm. Today's conviction, Graves said, is the result of Operation Ice Storm, a long-term investigation into the illegal distribution of large quantities of methamphetamine in southwest Missouri.

Jeffrey S. Bateman, 36, of Joplin, pleaded guilty before U.S. Magistrate Judge James C. England this morning to participating in a conspiracy to distribute at least five kilograms, but less than 15 kilograms, of methamphetamine from August 2002 to Sept. 20, 2004, in Jasper County. **Bateman** also pleaded guilty to being in possession of a .22-caliber Titan handgun on Feb. 6, 2003, for the purpose of furthering and facilitating his drug distribution activities. Under federal law, Graves explained, it is illegal to possess a firearm during or in relation to a drug trafficking crime.

When law enforcement officers arrested **Bateman** following a traffic stop on Feb. 6, 2003, he had a large knife concealed under his duster-style coat as well as an empty black holster, approximately 36.01 grams of methamphetamine concealed in his underclothing, and \$1,315 in his wallet. Law enforcement officers found the handgun inside the vehicle, under the center armrest.

Under federal statutes, **Bateman** could be subject to a mandatory minimum sentence of 15 years in federal prison without parole, up to life in federal prison without parole, plus a fine up to \$4 million. A sentencing hearing will be scheduled after the completion of a presentence investigation by the United States Probation Office.

Bateman is the seventh defendant to plead guilty to charges contained in an Oct. 14, 2004, federal indictment.

* **Ronald D. Preston**, 34, of Joplin, was sentenced on Nov. 10, 2005, to 15 years and eight months in federal prison without parole. On April 13, 2005, **Preston** pleaded guilty to his role in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

Five more co-defendants have pleaded guilty and await sentencing.

* **Roy Rodriguez**, 21, address unknown, pleaded guilty on Jan. 31, 2006, to participating in the methamphetamine conspiracy and to being in possession of a Titan .25-caliber handgun and five rounds of ammunition on Jan. 14, 2004, in connection with the drug trafficking offense. **Rodriguez** also admitted that he assaulted a federal grand jury witness, for which he has been charged in a separate case. **Rodriguez** assaulted the witness, stole his car, and stole property from his car, Graves said, in retaliation for that witness' testimony about the drug trafficking conspiracy. Under the terms of today's plea agreement, **Rodriguez** agrees to pay restitution to that victim and agrees that, at the time of sentencing, he should be subject to a sentencing enhancement for obstruction of justice. In exchange, the government will dismiss the federal indictment in that separate case. **Rodriguez** also agreed that he should be subject to a sentencing enhancement for obstruction of justice because he led law enforcement officers on a high-speed pursuit on May 19, 2005, as he fled to avoid arrest. **Rodriguez** also attempted to flee from officers attempting to arrest him on June 17, 2005, when he struck an officer's patrol car with his vehicle, thereby causing damage to the patrol car.

* **Marcus Glover**, 26, of Joplin, pleaded guilty to participating in the methamphetamine conspiracy on Jan. 26, 2006.

* **Victor M. Gomez-Coronado**, 34, a citizen of Mexico, pleaded guilty to participating in the methamphetamine conspiracy on Jan. 11, 2006. The government contends that **Gomez-Coronado** was a leader of the drug trafficking organization, and that he possessed a firearm in connection to the drug trafficking offense.

* **Jacquelyn M. Witt**, 21, of Carthage, Mo., pleaded guilty on April 18, 2005, to her role in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

* **Amy C. Lawrence**, 22, of Joplin, pleaded guilty on July 8, 2005, to her role in the conspiracy to distribute methamphetamine.

This case is being prosecuted by Assistant U.S. Attorney Robyn L. McKee. The case was investigated by the Jasper County Drug Task Force, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement, the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Joplin, Mo., Police Department, the Carthage, Mo., Police Department, the Jasper County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Jasper County, Mo., Metropolitan Police Department, the Carterville, Mo., Police Department, the Newton County, Mo., Sheriff's Department, the Missouri State Highway Patrol, the Central Oklahoma Metro Interdiction Team

and the Texas Department of Public Safety.

This news release, as well as additional information about the office of the United States Attorney for the Western District of Missouri, is available on-line at
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